

ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18th April, 2017

PRESENT - Councillor S Richmond (in the Chair); Councillors Kane, Lyolette, T Richmond and Storr. (5)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Culley, D Jones, Knowles, Lister, Mills, M. Nicholson. (6)

ABSENT –

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Ann Baxter, Interim Chair of the Darlington Adults Safeguarding Partnership Board.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – James Stroyan, Assistant Director, Adult Social Care, Anthony Sandys, Head of Housing and Revenues, Ken Davies, Housing Strategy Officer and Emma Chawner, Safeguarding Boards Business Manager.

AH34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

AH35. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of a meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 28th February, 2017.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

AH36. DARLINGTON ADULTS SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP BOARD – The Interim Chair of the Darlington Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board (DSAPB) gave an overview of the work and role of the Darlington Adults Safeguarding Partnership Board since it became a statutory body in accordance with the requirements of the Care Act 2014.

She outlined the overarching purpose of the Board which was to help and safeguard adults with care and support needs and the need for it to ensure that all partners worked together to achieve this and ensure that the outcome of any actions made a difference.

The Interim Chair outlined the work of the Board since she had come into position in June 2016, and reported that, as part of its work, the Board had also commissioned one lessons learnt review (LLR) and one statutory Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR). These reviews were to explore how agencies had worked together and to learn lessons from multi-agency practice.

Reference was also made to the current budget for the Darlington Adults Safeguarding Partnership Board, which was sufficient to maintain its costs in 2017/18 and it was reported that discussions were taking place with partners to agree funding contributions

from 2018/19 onwards.

Discussion ensued on the close links with the Darlington Safeguarding Children Board and to a joint safeguarding development session which had been held which had challenged how both Boards could work together effectively and efficiently to maximise the limited resources available; the main challenges for the Board in ensuring that the voice of service users and relatives were heard; how this Scrutiny Committee could assist with this as part of its work; and how the work programmes of both bodies could be aligned to ensure that each group was critically supporting each other appropriately.

RESOLVED – That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to the Interim Chair of the Darlington Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board.

AH37. INTRODUCING FLEXIBLE TENANCIES FOR SINGLE PEOPLE UNDER 35 – The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting Members' views on the introduction of two year flexible tenancies for single people under the age of 35 as a result of changes being introduced as part of the Government's welfare reforms.

The submitted report outlined the background to the proposal, which would particularly affect single people under 35 as they would have their benefit capped at the Local Housing Allowance shared room rate, which, in Darlington, was currently £59.20 per week, approximately £16 - £17 per week below current rents for one-bedroomed properties.

Reference was made to the risk to tenants in maintaining a tenancy once the changes came into effect and the powers available to local authorities, under the Localism Act 2011, to introduce two-year flexible tenancies for single people under 35 years of age, which would allow the Council to undertake more frequent reviews of a tenant's circumstances, particularly their financial position, allowing for constructive discussions to take place with them about any risks or changes.

It was reported that, from April to September, 2016, 147 properties were let to people under the age of 35. Of these, 46 were single and 32 were in receipt of benefits and that, using these figures to project the potential impact, accumulatively, about 130 tenants could be affected by April 2019, although there would be an unknown number of people who would be in receipt of Universal Credit by April 2019 to take account of.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

AH38. DEVELOPING A PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY – The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) outlining the requirements of all local authorities to develop a Homelessness Strategy every five years based on a review of the local homelessness within their area and then publish a strategy setting out how they intend to tackle and prevent it.

The submitted report outlined the background to the current strategy which covered the period up to 2017, together with its achievements and the proposals

to consult in the late summer/autumn on the development of the new strategy which would cover the period up to 2022.

Reference was made to the Homelessness Reduction Bill which was awaiting Royal Assent and which would add additional duties to prevent homelessness and to how this Scrutiny Committee could assist in the development of the Strategy by speaking to commissioned providers involved with homelessness prevention to learn about the support and services they offer and the type of accommodation provided and to hear the views of users.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and that arrangements be made for this Scrutiny Committee to visit a number of service providers involved with homelessness prevention.

AH39. CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT IN THE HOUSING SERVICE – RESOLVED

– That this item be deferred to the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 13th June, 2017.

AH40. SUPPORT FOR CARERS IN DARLINGTON – RESOLVED

– That this item be deferred to the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 13th June, 2017.

AH41. WORK PROGRAMME - The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2016/17.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.